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RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Written statement submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 1999]

GE.99-11336 (E)

Rehabilitation of the expatriate Greek citizens of Turkish and other non-Greek nationalities

1. The Society for Threatened Peoples emphatically welcomes the abolition of article 19 of the Greek citizenship law on 19 June 1998, under which 60,000 Greek citizens (predominantly of Turkish origin) were arbitrarily deprived of their citizenship by the Greek authorities in the years from 1955 to 1998. The Society for Threatened Peoples regrets, however, that the abolition of article 19 is not valid retroactively and that the Greek Government has introduced no measures until now to re-naturalize and rehabilitate these citizens who were arbitrarily deprived of their citizenship in this discriminatory way.

2. For decades, the Greek authorities arbitrarily revoked the citizenship of citizens of non-Greek origin who were living abroad, when they had the impression that those affected no longer had contact with their home towns. Members of the Turkish minority were predominantly affected by this and their existence is not recognized even today by the Greek authorities. Those affected did not have to be informed of the withdrawal of their citizenship and often first learned of it at the Greek consulates abroad when they wanted to renew their papers. According to information present at the Society for Threatened Peoples, citizenship was withdrawn from people of non-Greek origin who had moved away from their home towns, sold their property and left no relatives. As a result, 1,000-4,000 persons are living today as stateless people in Greece and suffer disadvantage in the areas of social services, health care and education. An unknown number have taken out new citizenship and are living abroad.

3. The Society for Threatened Peoples requests the Commission on Human Rights:

(a) To call upon the Greek Government to make the abolition of article 19 retroactive and immediately to revoke the discriminatory administrative acts; and

(b) To recommend to the Greek Government to guarantee reparations for the consequences of the arbitrary revocation of Greek citizenship on the grounds of ethnic origin.